

REMARKS

This is responsive to the Office Action mailed December 29, 2006 ("Office Action").

Claim Amendments

Claim 8 has been amended to more positively recite that the first process step occurs within the first module (Office Action p. 11). Support for this amendment can be found throughout the specification and particularly in paragraphs 0020, 0021, 0040, and 0042. No new matter is introduced by this amendment.

Claim 19 has been amended to more positively recite that the inert materials are separate and apart from a catalyst for any purpose (Office Action, p. 10). Support for this amendment can be found throughout the specification and particularly in paragraphs 0028, 0047, and 0049. No new matter is introduced by this amendment.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and (e)

Claims 18-19 stand rejected under §102(b) as being anticipated by Abe et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,576,203) ("Abe").

In addition to the arguments previously presented, claim 19 has been amended to more positively recite that the inert materials are separate and apart from a catalyst for any purpose (Office Action, p. 10). Support for this amendment can be found throughout the specification and particularly in paragraphs 0028, 0047, and 0049. No new matter is introduced by this amendment.

For these reasons, claim 19, and the claims which depend from claim 19, is not believed to be anticipated by Abe. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 18-19 under §102(b) as being anticipated by Abe is respectfully requested.

Claims 4, 8-14, and 20-28 stand rejected under §102(e) as being anticipated by Gonjo (U.S. Patent No. 6,159,434) ("Gonjo").

In addition to the arguments previously presented, claim 8 has been amended to more positively recite that the first process step occurs within the first module (Office Action p. 11). Support for this amendment can be found throughout the specification and particularly in paragraphs 0020, 0021, 0040, and 0042. No new matter is introduced by this amendment.

For these reasons, claim 8, and the claims which depend from claim 8, are not believed to be anticipated by Gonjo. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 4, 8-14, and 20-28 under §102(e) as being anticipated by Gonjo is respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claim 3 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Gonjo as applied to claim 8, and further in view of Nishida et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,387,399) ("Nishida"). Based on the amendment to claim 8, claim 3 is believed to be in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 3 under §103(a) is respectfully requested.

Claims 5-7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Gonjo as applied to claim 8, and further in view of Skala et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,238,815) ("Skala"). Based on the amendment to claim 8, claims 5-7 are believed to be in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 5-7 under §103(a) is respectfully requested.

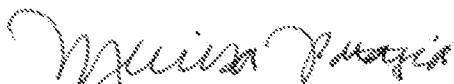
Claims 15-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Gonjo as applied to claims 8 and 20 and further in view of Clawson et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,126,908) ("Clawson '908"). Based on the amendment to claim 8, claims 15-16 are believed to be in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 15-16 under §103(a) is respectfully requested.

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All of the stated grounds of objection and rejection are believed to have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn. Applicants believe that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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